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Current Affairs - 06 September 2024

LAW COMMISSION'S ROLE, MEMBERS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Union government has notified the constitution of the **23rd Law Commission of India** with effect from **September 1**.

Law Commission of India is a **non-statutory body** constituted by the Union government.

- It is a commission established to ensure that the laws formed are just and fair which work towards its proper implementation.
- It can be referred to as an **ad hoc body**, which is constituted for the fulfilment of a particular purpose.
- Basically, it works as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law and Justice.
- However, it is not defined under the Indian Constitution. It is constituted as part of **Article 39A**.

History of Law Commission in India:

- The first pre-independence law commission was established in **1834** by the British Government in India.
 - It was established by the **Charter Act of 1833** and was chaired by **Lord Macaulay**.
- The first Law Commission of independent India was established in the year 1955 which was headed by **M.C. Setalvad**.
- Since the independence of India, there have been 22 Law Commissions. The current Law Commission (22nd) is chaired by **Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi**.

How is the Law Commission Created?

- A law commission is **created when the Union government passes a resolution for the formation a new commission after the expiry of the last one**.
- After the resolution is passed, and the President gives assent to it, the government has the liberty to choose the chairperson for the new commission.

Composition of Law Commission:



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- The Commission is headed by a **Chairperson**, usually a **retired Supreme Court judge**, and comprises legal experts, academicians, and senior advocates.
- The members are appointed for a **term of three years**, during which they focus on different areas of legal reforms.

Functions & Role:

- The main function of the Law Commission is to recommend reforms based on detailed research and public consultation. Key tasks include:
- **Reviewing existing laws:** To identify obsolete or irrelevant laws that need to be repealed or amended.
- **Proposing new laws:** Based on emerging legal challenges or gaps in the system.
- **Simplifying legal processes:** To make laws more accessible and understandable to the general public.
- **Studying judicial reforms:** Recommending changes in the judiciary to enhance efficiency, reduce delays, and improve justice delivery.

Important Recommendations of the Commission:

- The Law Commission has **submitted 277 reports**.
 - Important Recommendations include:
 - The **170th report** of the Law commission on Electoral reforms, 1999 had suggested **simultaneous Lok Sabha and State Assembly Elections**. It recommended that this is for the improvement of governance and stability of the states.
 - The Law Commission in its **262nd report** recommended the **abolition of death penalty** for all crimes except terror-related offences and waging war against the state.
 - In recent years, the Commission has worked on sensitive issues such as **hate speech, uniform civil code, and data protection laws**.
 - Its reports have been a source of significant debate and have helped in shaping new legislation.
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WHAT IS INTERPOL?



The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) chief recently announced that Interpol had issued a record 100 Red Notices last year, the highest ever, on India's request.

- The **International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)**, commonly known as Interpol, is an international organization facilitating international police cooperation against cross-border terrorism, trafficking, and other crimes.
- It is the **world's largest international police organization**, representing 195 member countries.
- It is headquartered in **Lyon, France**.
- **Official Languages:** Arabic, English, French, and Spanish.
- **Status:** It is 'not' a unit or part of a United Nations system. It is an independent international organization.
- It is often the first point of contact for many countries pursuing an international investigation. It does not actively investigate crimes.
- **Governance:**
 - The General Assembly, consisting of **one delegate from each member country**, is Interpol's supreme decision-making body.
- **National Central Bureau (NCB):**
 - It has an **NCB in each member country**, which is the central point of contact for both the general secretariat and the other NCBs around the world.
 - Each NCB is run by police officials of that country and usually sits in the government ministry responsible for policing. (**Union Home Ministry in India**.)
 - **The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** represents Interpol in India as the country's NCB.



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WHAT IS THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (PAC)?



- It is a committee of selected members of parliament, constituted by the **Parliament of India**, to audit the **revenue and expenditure** of the Government of India.
- It serves as a check on the government, especially for its **expenditure bill** and its primary function is to examine the audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) after it is laid in Parliament.
- C&AG assists the committee during the course of the investigation.
- The main function of the committee is to ascertain whether the **money granted by parliament has been spent by the government within the scope of the demand.**
- **Membership:**
 - PAC consists of not more than **twenty-two members, fifteen elected by Lok Sabha, and not more than seven members of Rajya Sabha.**
 - The members are elected every year from amongst the members of respective houses according to the **principle of proportional representation** by means of a single transferable vote.
 - The term of office of the members is **one year.**
 - The **Chairperson** of the Committee is **appointed by the Speaker** from amongst the members of the Committee from Lok Sabha.

Functions:

- The functions of the Committee include examination of accounts showing the **appropriation of sums granted by Parliament for the expenditure of the Government of India**, the annual finance accounts of the Government and such other accounts laid before the House as the Committee may think fit.



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CENTRALIZED PENSION PAYMENT SYSTEM



Centralized Pension Payment System provides a **national-level centralized system** allowing pension payouts through any bank or branch in India.

- This replaces the current decentralized pension disbursement system, where each EPFO Zonal/Regional Office maintains individual arrangements with just three to four banks.

Who is eligible for a pension?

- Individuals have to fulfil the following criteria to be eligible for availing benefits under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS).
 - Should be a member of EPFO
 - Should have completed 10 years of service
 - Has reached the age of 58
- They can also withdraw the EPS at a reduced rate from the **age of 50 years** and can also defer the pension for two years (up to 60 years of age) after which they will get a pension at an additional rate of 4% for each year.
- This facility will be launched as part of EPFO's ongoing IT modernization project Centralized IT Enabled System (CITES 2.01) **from 1st January 2025**.

Benefits: The CPPS would also ensure **disbursement of pension throughout India without any need for transfer of Pension Payment Orders (PPO)** from one office to another even when the Pensioner moves from one location to another or changes his bank or branch.

- It is estimated to benefit more than 78 lakh EPFO EPS pensioners and will particularly benefit retirees who relocate to their hometown after retirement.



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NATIONAL TEST HOUSE



National Test House is a premier institution under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**.

- It has been serving the nation since **1912**.
- It is India's largest **multi-location multidisciplinary** industrial central government testing laboratory dealing with almost all sorts of testing, calibration and quality evaluation related to industry, commerce, trade etc. as per international and national standards.
- It offers technical consultancy, testing, calibration, and quality evaluation across various sectors, adhering to both national and international standards.
- It is the pioneering governmental entity in India **for drone certification**.
- Its branches are established in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Ghaziabad, Jaipur, Guwahati and Varanasi.

Key facts about Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

- It was established in 2002 under the provisions of the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- **Objective:** The primary objective of BEE is to reduce energy intensity in the Indian economy.
- **Function**
 - It coordinates with **designated consumers, designated agencies** and other organizations; recognizes, identifies and utilizes the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.
 - The EC Act provides for regulatory and promotional functions which are assigned to the organisation.

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Regulatory functions

- Develop minimum energy performance standards for equipment and appliances under Standards and Labelling
 - Develop minimum energy performance standards for Commercial Buildings
 - Develop Energy Consumption Norms for Designated Consumers
 - **Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Power**
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THE FOOD SECURITY ACT HAS REVAMPED THE PDS

Context

- The **National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 2013** aimed to **guarantee food security** through an expanded Public Distribution System (PDS) in India.
- However, **concerns over inefficiencies in the PDS**, particularly high levels of leakages, have persisted.
- Therefore, **it is important to have an assessment on the evolution of the PDS, its reforms, and the ongoing challenges it faces** considering recent data from the **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23**.

Concerns Surrounding Inefficiencies in the PDS

- **Leakages in the PDS refer to the failure of food grains to reach the intended beneficiaries**, often due to corruption, theft, or inefficiencies in the supply chain.
- According to the National Sample Survey (NSS) of 2011-12, **at the national level, PDS leakages stood at an alarming 41.7%**.
- This **figure reflected a poorly functioning system**, contributing to the nervousness surrounding the NFSA's ambition to guarantee food security through this channel.
- **Expanded PDS Systems**
 - **Some states have implemented their own expanded PDS programs** beyond the NFSA-mandated coverage, providing additional food grains to non-NFSA

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beneficiaries using both central government allocations and their own resources (e.g., local procurement).

- For instance, **Chhattisgarh passed its own food security law in 2012**, making the PDS quasi-universal through local procurement and expanded eligibility criteria.
- **Diverse Causes of Leakages**
 - While the methodology attributes all mismatches between offtake and purchases to leakages, **there could be other explanations for these gaps.**
 - **Transport losses, pilferage during distribution, discrepancies in reporting, and delays in the delivery of food grains to PDS outlets** may all contribute to the observed shortfall.
 - Some portion of what is classified as leakage may simply be a result of operational inefficiencies rather than intentional diversion of grain.

Conclusion

- **The NFSA 2013, along with the reforms it mandated, has led to significant improvements in the PDS**, particularly in reducing leakages and expanding coverage.
 - However, **challenges remain, including reaching full coverage** and addressing the inefficiencies in states that have historically performed well.
 - **The government must focus on strengthening the PDS further by continuing state-level reforms, expediting the Census, and incorporating more nutritious food items into the distribution system.**
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SAMRIDH SCHEME

SAMRIDH SCHEME FOR



Recently, the Union Ministry of Electronics & IT secretary launched the 2nd Cohort of Startup Accelerators of MeitY for Product Innovation, Development and Growth (SAMRIDH) scheme.

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About SAMRIDH Scheme:

- SAMRIDH is the Union Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) 's flagship programme for startup acceleration under the National Policy on Software Products—2019.
- It was launched in August 2021 and supports 300 software product startups with an outlay of ₹99 crore over a **period of 4 years**.
- It aims to support **existing and upcoming Accelerators** to select and accelerate potential IT-based startups to scale.
- Among others, the program focuses on **accelerating the startups** by providing customer connect, investors connect and connect to international markets

Eligibility of Accelerator

- Should be a registered Section-8/Society, [**Not-for-Profit Company** (eligible to hold equity)] having operations in India.
 - The Accelerator and the team are recommended to have more **than 3 years of startup experience** and should have supported more than 50 start-ups of which at least 10 startups should have received investment from external Investors
 - The Accelerator should have **experience in running startup program cohorts** with activities listed as desirable under the SAMRIDH program.
 - It is being implemented through potential and established accelerators across India which provide services like making products market fit, business plan, investor connect and international expansion to **startups plus matching funding up to ₹40 lakh by MeitY**.
 - **Implemented by:** The scheme is being implemented by **MeitY Start-up Hub (MSH), Digital India Corporation (DIC)**.
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